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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 000193

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FOR NEA/PI, NEA/ARP, NEA/PPD, ABU DHABI FOR MEPI (HWECHSEL,  
MHOPKINS)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/12/2017  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KMPI](#) [KPAO](#) [KU](#) [MEPI](#)  
SUBJECT: UPCOMING NDI PROGRAMMING IN KUWAIT

REF: A. STATE 14306  
[1](#)B. KUWAIT 174

Classified By: ADCM Timothy Lenderking for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) Embassy Kuwait approves of the overall direction of the workplan set out by NDI for spending the rest of its funding. The emphasis on building the political capacity of women, political associations, and youth works toward the USG's Freedom Agenda goals for Kuwait. Post offers the following suggestions to hone the workplan and to determine next steps.

Women

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[1](#)2. (C/NF) The chairman of the parliamentary women's committee noted to us recently that women have not gotten involved enough in civil society (ref b). He found it problematic that most NGOs and professional associations had very few if any women on their boards. He felt that most women were involved in NGOs explicitly devoted to women's issues or saw politics and civil society only as a means to resolving personal bureaucratic problems. Programming to increase general female civic involvement in existing organizations that can mobilize voters would therefore be useful.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Women complained during the last elections that they did not have enough time to organize their campaigns. Most of the women who are potential candidates in the next elections do not seem to be preparing in earnest. Even if elections do not take place until scheduled in 2010, the planning process should begin now. There is always the possibility of another snap election, which means women will need to be especially proactive in their organizational efforts. Ideally, programming in Kuwait would emphasize the importance of starting early, perhaps by setting benchmarks or other means of encouraging early preparations.

[1](#)4. (SBU) The NDI focus on providing research about the issues that people actually vote on is especially important. Many, though not all, of the women who ran in the last elections have an elite social and educational background that makes it difficult for them to connect with many voters. Post reiterates the importance of reaching out to women who may not have benefited from MEPI-funded programs in the past, and stands ready to assist NDI in identifying them.

Political "Blocs"

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[1](#)5. (C/NF) In Kuwaiti politics, political "blocs" refer to the loose, undisciplined coalitions of MPs in the parliament. A better term for the targets of NDI programming is

political associations. A key feature of Kuwaiti politics is that the Islamist groups are generally the best organized and most sophisticated in their outreach efforts. It is important that other groups get the training and resources to compete on a level playing field. The role of political associations in Kuwait is politically sensitive and great care must be taken in any USG-sponsored approach. There are certain groups with whom we should not work, particularly the Salafis. However, other Islamists enjoy great popularity and have demonstrated a commitment to democratic politics, at least for the foreseeable future. Excluding them might delegitimize the entire project, and we will need to be sensitive to this.

Youth

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16. (C/NF) Post suggests that more emphasis be placed on sustainability and follow-up in the youth-centered programming. The suggested programming plans to work on "organizational structures, strategic planning, membership development, platform development, communication strategies." These are worthwhile goals, but it might be useful to come up with more tangible short-term projects. For instance, each youth group could prepare two small or medium-sized projects to complete within six months. They would present their idea to the other groups for feedback. A follow-up event could be held six months later to evaluate the status of the groups' projects.

NDI Not Coordinating Activities in Kuwait Sufficiently

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17. (C/NF) Post is unsatisfied with its communications with

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NDI. We have repeatedly requested to be kept informed of NDI activities in country, but are frequently surprised to learn that their representatives have been in country talking to various groups about U.S.-funded projects. We have heard some complaints from Kuwaiti contacts about sporadic and disconnected NDI visits (of which the Embassy was unaware).

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